



City of Tempe

MINUTES FOR THE SIGN FOCUS GROUP
MEETING

11:00 - 1:00 pm, November 14, 2001
Development Services Conference Room

ATTENDANCE:

Pete Lang, The Original Sign Factory
Mindy Lang, The Original Sign Factory
Dr. W.J. LoPiano, former Councilman
Stanley Nicpon, Design Review Board
Eric Emmert, Tempe Chamber of Commerce
Bonnie Richardson, COT Development Services
Fred Brittingham, COT Development Services

Maryann Miller, Tempe Chamber of Commerce
John Calkins, Maxicraft Signs
Ernie Nickels
Patti King, Arizona Sign Association
Scot Siegel, Otak
Ryan Levesque, COT Development Services
Grace Kelly, COT Development Services

• INTRODUCTION

- Does the DS staff believe that the sign section needs rewriting? Everything in the existing zoning ordinance is being looked at; that is why we are here today. There have been suggestions whether or not we leave it as is, modify certain aspects of the sign section, or change it all together.

• USERS OF THE SYSTEM, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- I am a big fan of the Tempe sign ordinance. It was very successful in creating a beautiful community. There might be just some issues with the maximum square footage regulations.
- Tempe is probably one of the prettiest cities in the Valley due to sign regulations.
- The development in Tempe peaked in the late 70's. As a result, the complaints from the restrictions on signage was the result of a complimenting city.
- In the early 1960's, the first comprehensive plan was developed. Don Hull carried out most of the comprehensive plan's projects.
- Prior to the 1960's we didn't have a Planning Director. The signage in Tempe went from what ever to where ever you wanted it.
- Tempe has a reasonableness to regulating signage. In south Tempe everything is by the book. In the downtown there is some consideration and lenience to the type and size of signs.
- The way we regulate signs in the past couple of years has changed.
- Tempe Chamber of Commerce, business owners like the sign ordinance. But the size requirements are the #1 complaint from business owners.

- With the Design Review Board, there are three issues from applicants. #1, they are unaware of the regulations. #2, our corporate signs are not of a particular color. #3, the process takes too long.
- The landlords are the true culprit with failing to recognize to their tenants the signage requirements.
- We here, "Why can't I do it, when a guy over there is doing it?"
- Can the city restrict color from a trademark sign? A court appeals decision, the color sign was to be modified, but the logo's color was allowed.
- There is a difference between corporate logos and the mom and pop and the amount of fight each type of business is willing to put up with the current regulations.
- Sign Association, in the intro of the sign section it doesn't address the businesses need to ensure the success of the business through adequate signage.
- There are two completely different types of signage: logos and advertisement.
- Freestanding signs: A 5' to 8' frame was considered to allow visibility from the shrubs that grow about 3' in height. Trees mature to about an 8 to 10' clear visibility underneath. Hence the height of freestanding signs.
- One problem is that at tree's maturity it is hard to see the building and its signage on the building. You get businesses wanting to cut down all their trees so their business is visible. Fearing that the reason why their business is losing sales because they don't enough signage.
- Wall mounting signs currently allow 40 to 80 square feet. A percentage of a businesses frontage would be a more desirable calculation.
- There have been a lot of variance requests in the size requirements, most of them have been approved.
- The masonry based signs is difficult to adhere to, with the sign company requiring to contract out a separate builder for the base.
- The use of a non-faros stucco metal could be acceptable for the base of signs. Aluminum with synthetic stucco.
- There are various structural concepts out there for signage bases. The current ordinance allows a limited amount of types.
- The intent of using masonry bases for signs was the lasting durability and a desire to match the design elements of the building.
- Raceways on building are not permitted in Tempe. A raceway contains the electrical in a metal box and the signage is placed on a track for mounting. It is easier to use this type of mounting when signage locations on a building is limited.

- Concern: The sign ordinance does not prohibit raceways, but the Design Review does not allow it. Over time the Design Review has made its own rules. One of them is no raceways and no medallions.
- The ordinance says no crawl signs, but McClintock High has one. Public schools are not regulated by city zoning ordinance.
- I hate beer signs in windows! When things are going bad for a business, put up as many beer signs as you can.
- The ordinance currently allows up to 25% of window area.
- The enforcement portion of signage: I would suggest the employees to have days off on Mondays and Tuesdays, so the enforcement can catch free standing sign violators on the weekend.
- I cannot compete against the business of companies constructing illegal permanent signs. We figure in the cost involved to get through the city process, usually several hundred dollars.
- The process is braking down with catching illegal signage.
- Grand opening banners allow for 14 days, but the process takes longer.
- In Phoenix, if an application of a permit sign has been applied, the city will allow any temporary sign for grand opening or whatever.
- When a change of business or change in ownership occurs allow the opportunity for "special event" signs.
- Raceways should be allowed in the ordinance, subject to Design Review approval.
- "14 day rule on grand openings", allow the business to have signage up until the process is complete.
- Use a percentage versus a square footage requirement to sign sizes.
- Allow menu boards to go up to 50 square feet, as long as its screened from the street.
- Allow maximum 500 s.f. for signage.
- Consideration for different regulations on tall buildings.
- Projects with freeway exposure should allow opportunities to display their business visibly.
- No size restrictions on signs for parking lots. Especially in the downtown area. I do not want to hear that there is not enough parking in downtown Tempe.
- Tempe is heading towards a pedestrian-oriented design philosophy. How can we address this philosophy with the signage section? Our sign program is designed for the automobile.
- If the buildings are placed where the signage use to be, then you don't need a freestanding sign.
- It is important to address the pedestrian level of activity and how that signage is conveyed.
- Comments on the handout sheet:

- Why would we consider #4?
- I disagree with #2 suggestion. Arizona Sign Association: I agree.
- We advocate freedom of signage
- A phone number on signage should not be permitted.
- Is it advertising or sell copy, ex: Walgreens "get your drugs at Walgreens"
- A reinforcement of address numbers on signage is a must.
- Thank you all for your time. Copies will be sent to this focus group for review of the sign ordinance.